

Distant

MFA 2020 Candidate Thesis Document

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Distant

By

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The Land

The land I stand on is not only a home but a place of contemplation, learning, growth and contention. As I move from coast to coast and place to place, I am continually reminded of the lost stories that the land holds. Throughout my childhood I was taught to respect the land which has impacted my life in every aspect, especially my artistic practice.

While I write this document, I am planted on the unceded lands of the Coast Salish territories; the traditional and ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations.

The Horizon

I have been looking out at the horizon ever since I can remember. The horizon is a visual example of a distance that is physically unreachable. In this document, I define the horizon as both a metaphoric place where longing resides and also a physical site that can be seen. In other words, the horizon is an in-between space that we can perceive, but never physically reach. I believe that this is where longing resides. Longing for people, places, things, or communities that are somehow lost or unreachable. The horizon becomes something yearned for. We want to reach it and in doing so, reconnect with everything missed. Although we cannot reach the horizon that we see, we are always present within someone else's horizon. When we are geographically inaccessible to someone within our lives, they find us somewhere in their horizon and vice versa. Inevitably because of this there is a "there" that exists wherever we are not and a "here" wherever we are. The horizon space I talk about becomes the distance that spans between "there" and "here".

Somewhere within "my horizon¹" is where my research resides. My primary and most fundamental question is, how can I represent the emotion of longing materially? This inquiry has led me to investigate the ways in which materials, processes, stories, and actions within my work often portray different aspects of this emotion. While longing may be understood as an inexplicable feeling within the body, I see it as an interwoven fabric of affect, sensorial stimulation, and recollection. The more I have searched to understand and situate longing, the more complicated my material practice has become. What colour(s) holds the essence of longing? How can I understand and map the space² between myself and the

¹ My Horizon – the space that I see in the distance but I cannot reach. This space homes everything that I long for, different than that of anyone else's horizon. Horizon in this definition is not just the visual point but a metaphoric link between my own emotions and longing.

² A metaphoric space, not physical.

emotion of longing through tactile means? In this paper, I will discuss how storytelling, tactile skills, the colour blue, repetition, and gesture work to help me articulate longing within my practice. I have chosen to insert sections of blue text through my thesis document which recount and articulate my memories of longing.

The Islander

I can see the wind that slashes the water and the waves that erode the rocks. I can hear the seagulls that chatter at the waters edge and the rocks that tumble under my feet. I can taste the salt in the air. I can breathe it. I can feel it. When I close my eyes and exhale...inhale... I feel it all again.

When I was younger, I would sit on a rock. It was a big rock. Hoisting myself onto it during low tide I would sit and take in the place around me. I'd know it was time to leave with the water would begin to roll in and the light would begin to dim. That moment, minutes, sometimes hours. But now they all run into each other. I sat there so many times. The memory of sitting on that rock gets jumbled with every other time I sat there. Was the rock my friend? Or was the ocean my friend? The ocean told me when to go home, while the rock kept me grounded and stable. Maybe neither were my friends. But they were always there.

You know, all those times I sat on that rock, I never once felt alone. I mean, from what I remember I didn't feel alone. Funny right?

Newfoundland³ is an island situated on the most easterly point of Canada. The island uniquely has its very own time zone which is an extra half an hour outside of the next nearest province. A half an hour difference which makes it foreign to everything that surrounds it, including even the country it resides in. It's just as much a part of the Atlantic Ocean as it is a part of Canada, making it the starting point for my own contemplation into longing.

I believe it is important to first frame my artistic discussion with my own background and upbringing as an islander from Newfoundland. My personal experiences which were influenced by an island rearing, hold the foundation of my research. There is a particular culture in Newfoundland that is

³ I would like to acknowledge that the east coast of Newfoundland where I was born, raised and now visit is the ancestral territories of the Mi'Kmaq and Beothuk. I would like to further acknowledge that the land on which I completed my undergraduate (west coast) is the traditional territory of the Mi'Kmaq people. I also must extend my respect for the diverse histories and cultures of the Innu and Inuit peoples.

directly linked to the notion of *islandness*⁴. Geographer Philip Conkling was one of the first to explore the subject of islanders/islands and coined the term islandness to further understand island living (Conkling, 2007). This term expresses “a metaphysical sensation that derives from the heightened experience that accompanies physical isolation” (Conkling, 191). Scholars across different fields of study have also investigated the phenomenon of islandness. Artist and writer Jane Walker⁵, a fellow Newfoundlander, explores the notion of islandness and how it connects us not only in Newfoundland but across any inhabited island. Some of Walker’s most recent work has showcased the difficult dilemmas that islanders face when critically assessing their futures. In her work *Should I Stay* (Figure 1) she uses the traditional skill of rug hooking along with text to explore her own relationship to islandness. Walker’s artwork grapples with place by using mundane materials and traditional methods. This way of working is ingrained in her cultural upbringing as an islander in the same way it is ingrained in myself.

Conkling focuses on how a geographic distance can foster islandness however, I begin to wonder how things like social, cultural and technological distances can breed the same experience as islandness.



(Figure 1) *Should I Stay* – Jane Walker, 2019. Photo: Jane Walker. Used by permission of the artist.

⁴ Islandness is a term coined by scientist Philip Conkling (2007) and is used among geographers but has been finding new life within many other disciplines.

⁵ Jane Walker, a Newfoundland based artist has been working with Vivian Ross-Smith a Scotland based artist on a project called Islandness which explores the connections between isolation and island living. Using mundane materials and craft-based processes they collaborate from across the Atlantic Ocean.

When I look at Walker's artwork I feel as though I see here grapple with a similar thought. It is not just a reflection on the isolation that islands bring, but a closer look at culture, making, and community. I believe the isolation created from islandness breeds a stronger community dynamic that thrives on the passing down and strength of generational knowledge(s). Through my own experiential research, I have learned that participating in traditional ways of making and craft-based processes can reconnect me to people, culture and places longed for. My memories are saturated with images of loved ones knitting, sewing, woodworking, and mending not just for hobby but out of necessity. Many of these skills have been passed on to me and while I do not have the necessity to use them for survival⁶, I feel closer to the people who taught me when I participate in them. This allows me to actively live within a space of longing, and also provides me with the intimate time to process how I am contributing to my own ancestry of makers by keeping these skills alive. It is a way to create space, and a place of belonging within my own complicated contemplations on displacement⁷. Craft becomes a home away from home, a hug from a loved one through a repeated stitch or a heartfelt chat at 10:00 pm on the couch.

In my cultural upbringing, oral and written histories are passed down generationally similar to textile and handicraft skills. The Weltkulturen Museum in Germany reflected on textiles within their collection, their production, and their innate correlation with narrative in a publication titled *The Common Thread: The Warp and Weft of Thinking*. Their discussion draws relations between oral or written knowledge and tactile knowledge: "Text and texture are intimately linked, as is evident from their Latin root word *texere*, to weave or compose artistically. The word 'text' itself is derived from *textus*, woven material." (Gliszczynski, 165). Within my own practice I see text similarly, I use introspective narratives to repeat, through text, my own encounters with longing. Through embroidery, I use text as a physical tool to incorporate specific narratives of displacement within my artwork.

The Home

"Longing, because desire is full of endless distances." – Robert Hass

When I'm thinking about the space created through participating in the skills passed on to me, I begin thinking about the correlation between technological advancement and feelings of longing and displacement within society. Writer, artist and fellow Newfoundlander Pam Hall talks about the

⁶ Living on an island has many challenges. The ability to buy what you need was more of a privilege or dream rather than a necessity. Growing up, everything was home grown, handed down, reused and refurbished.

⁷ Throughout this paper I will be using the words displaced, and displacement. I use these terms interchangeably with longing. Displacement as defined by this paper is not restricted to the physical dislodgement of a body from a specific place. It can be equivalent to (but not exclusively) feelings of alienation within cultural, societal, and familial spheres.

perspective of traditional knowledge in her encyclopedia titled *Towards an Encyclopedia of Local Knowledge*:

“Many of us imagine that the *traditional* is already dead or dying and that what our elders knew or *how* they knew is neither useful nor relevant in our current technological modern era. We have GPS now, so why learn to navigate with a watch and a compass?” (Hall, 21).

Hall is right, one may think that traditional knowledge is “outdated”. This viewpoint can actively stunt the growth or passing down of more oral or tactile knowledge that needs to be practiced and experienced. The distance from tacit knowledge can serve to isolate us from our own cultures, ancestries, and the tactile nature of our own bodies. Making by hand has the ability to reconnect us to heritage and family. Tim Ingold writes about the connection we once had to our hands and the knowledge acquired through making: “We *can* tell of what we know through practice and experience, precisely because telling is itself a modality of performance that *abhors* articulation and specification.” (Ingold, 109). Ingold’s explanation of how practice and experience cannot simply be articulated through language alone is captivating. This strengthens my argument that textiles and the hand labor required to produce them inherently carries narrative and a form of language in itself. He goes on to further discuss the limitations of the English language to articulate and share certain forms of knowledge. Ingold uses the example: “Letter writers tell of their affairs, but they can tell from the inflections of the handwritten line how a correspondent who has written to them is feeling.” (Ingold, 110). While the text of the letter, or the spoken word expresses an explicit story, the inflections and expressions tell a story not so easily articulated. This is true when attempting to express the complexities of ephemera, affect, and generational knowledge. Moreover, if the performance of making by hand continues to be lost society will lose a whole facet of language that expresses what words cannot adequately convey. Within my material practice, I employ hand labour because, like Ingold, I believe there are certain ways of expressing experiential knowledge that cannot be articulated through words or spoken language alone.

In creating my artwork, *I Want Them Back* (Figure 2), I considered the relationship between the unspoken knowledge provided through both hand labour and text. By mixing textiles and narrative I wanted to create a space for the contemplation of longing. Writing’s immediacy and ability to capture thoughts as they emerge differs greatly from longing. Longing is weighted and slow. It is similar to a relentless ache felt throughout the body all at once. Stitching the sensations of longing onto the sheet of cotton was a slow, repetitive process. One line reads, *Infinity holds the memories I lose and those I gave away*. Each letter required that I stab the needle through the fabric tens of times. In this slow process, I was able to live within each letter and breathe between each space, my fingers cramping and neck aching

Place begins to unfold
Every gesture
trying to save it. Flitting at the edge of my
specters that play with the shadows out of my
It ~~leaves my head~~ ~~but~~ ~~my~~ ~~and~~
Infinity holds the memories I lose and
and those I gave away. The container of the
and abandoned.
I want them back

(Figure 2) *I Want Them Back* - Emma Burry, 2019.

until the end. The text, embroidered into the fabric and knotted into place, can only partially be read. Using the accumulation and layering of text I was able to experiment with the legibility of the work, choosing what the viewer can read and what is too jumbled to decipher. The embroidery pulls at the substrate, bunching it, wrinkling it, and causing tension that did not previously exist. Within this mess and chaos rendered in cloth, my hope was to create a space to live within longing.

The text used in the work was my own poetic considerations of what longing is, how it feels and what it does. It reads like a letter but does not fully disclose any specific details. Like Ingold states:

“The key thing about stories is that they provide practitioners with the means to tell on what they know *without* specifying it. They do not so much carry encrypted information as offer pointers of where to go and what to look for.” (Ingold, 110).

My goal in the text was to give the viewer a textual path to follow. The text within the artwork provided an entryway into my own experiences of longing. It was important to share my narrative - or at least provide directions - through labor and longing. What I allow the viewer to access becomes the stepping stones for their own thoughts, while the text that is inaccessible because of layering is the lacuna⁸.

With the slow erosion of skills, handicraft, and community, it is more and more common for individuals to feel isolated or displaced. The emotional weight of longing is felt by more people everyday, as we search for greater connections with others within a society that has become increasingly alienating. Islandness begins to appear in people I meet who live in large landlocked cities. In my practice, I attempt to reach people who feel like islands, to explore and map the distance of longing and provide a space to face our own feelings of isolation. I use a process-based system that invites those who can empathize with a loss of time, belonging, and comfort.

The Ocean

“We love to contemplate blue - not because it advances us, but because it draws us after it.” – Goethe

I still believe there is a way to communicate the ephemerality of affect through alternative means. As an islander, I see this longing within the horizon⁹, a visual representation of distance, a place never reached but always in view. Writer Rebecca Solnit writes fondly of the horizon and the blue at the edges of our vision which make up the visual qualities of a felt distance. Her chapters “Blue of Distance” in *A*

⁸ I refer to lacuna for its definition as a missing component or piece of text, but I also see the lacuna as a void or in between where the reader is aware that something is there but it is inaccessible.

⁹ The horizon for islander women has long been a visual sign of hope and longing as they waited for loved ones to return home from fishing expeditions.

Field Guide to Getting Lost poetically express the connections between inner longing and outer distance (Solnit, 2005). The horizon has also been the inspiration for many artists throughout art history and is still an inspiration for many contemporary artists today. Artist Christopher Pratt, a fellow Newfoundlander, has painted it many times (Figure 3).

Representing longing visually is a difficult endeavor. Pratt deals with this through his process of mathematically proportioning the landscape until it looks too perfect to be real. I have personally taken to the colour blue as another tool to aid in my attempts of portraying longing. Solnit writes not only about



(Figure 3) *Ice, Moon and Tanker* – Christopher Pratt Used by permission of the artist.

the horizon but also about blue. She states, “The color of that distance is the color of an emotion, the color of solitude and desire, the color of there seen from here, and the color of where you are not. And the color of where you will never go.” (Solnit, 29). The inexplicable push and pull of conflicting emotions and diverging understandings live simultaneously in the horizon, in longing, and in the colour blue. Within both artistic and psychological fields, the colour blue has been used to describe depth, emptiness, sadness, and calmness; all the qualities that I believe make up longing.

In colour theory, blue can be used to darken a scene, to create visual distance, and to create shadows. Scientists understand blue as light which, “disperses among the molecules of the air, it scatters in water... full of this scattered light... the sky is blue for the same reason.” (Solnit, 29). As an islander, the colour blue also represents the horizon I see in my memories, somehow the scattered light that gets lost seems to mimic the fragmentary nature of my memories. Both my memories and the light create the deepest blue that appears between the boundless ocean and the immense blue sky. Outside of colour theory, the colour blue has intrigued writers and thinkers. Wallace J. Nichols, author of the novel *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science that Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do* (2014), has coined the term *Blue Mind*. The definition of Blue Mind is when you are emotionally, physically, and psychologically affected by your proximity to water. This “blue mindedness” may be the first step to understanding an inherent connection to water and how the colour blue can have emotional and physical effects. The complexity of this colour is enticing to me and has pushed me to think more deeply about the impact of sensory experience on our emotional states.

There is some aspect of blue that seems to intrinsically hold the complexities of longing, something I am still trying to decipher. In my practice I use a unique mix of blues to create a shade that best represents the emotion of longing. It is a specific tone which is mostly cool but holds a small amount of warm undertones. I create this tone in order to emphasize the optical push and pull that blue inherently has. When I make this blue, I mix the different shades until the colour reflects the memories I want to infuse in my work.

My grandma asked me: “Emma, do you remember the rock you used to sit on all the time?”

Me: “Ya, of course.”

Grandma: “Sometimes I still picture you there. Do you think you’ll ever sit on it again?”

The Boat

“The blue of distance comes with time, with the discovery of melancholy, of loss, the texture of longing, of the complexity of the terrain we traverse, and with the years of travel.” – Rebecca Solnit

Through repetition, I attempt to grasp the complexities of the emotions that come with longing. Frustration, loss, sadness, futility, and isolation are all emotional factors associated with yearning. I usually incorporate laborious techniques and repetitive gestures that build up or deconstruct the picture plane as a method to work through longing. bell hooks writes about repetition in her novel *belonging: a culture of place* in a way that has inspired my thoughts about the use of repetition in my practice. hooks recounts:

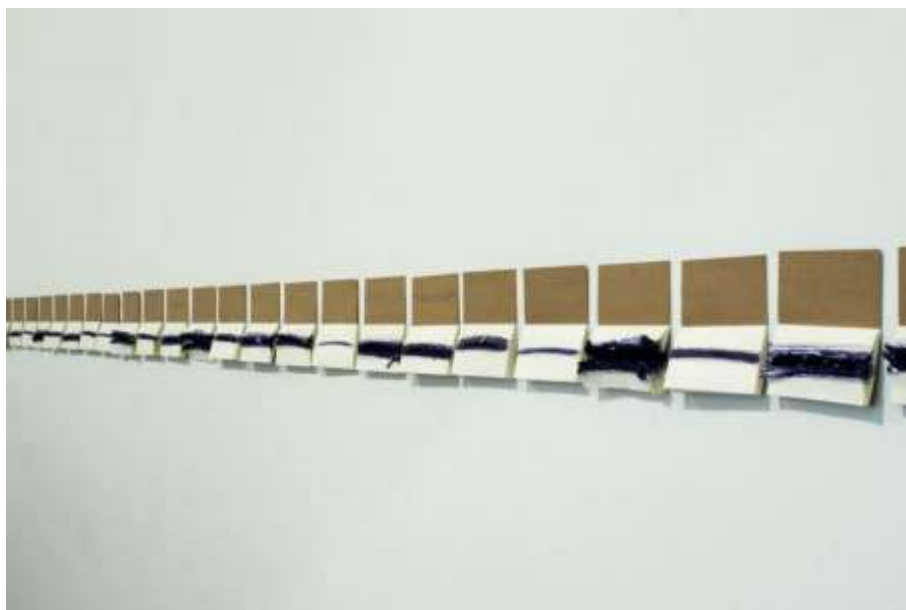
“I find repetition scary. It seems to suggest a static stuck quality... And it reminds me of how my elders tell me the same stories over and over again. Hearing the same story makes it impossible to forget.” (hooks, 3).

I see a parallel in my work in the way that hooks writes about repetition as an important act of remembering. Repetition is not only the frustration of being stuck or looping within a futile cycle, but it is a way of engraining experience, knowledge, and longing into the work.

I am inspired by British artist Richard Long who repeats one gesture over extended periods of time to create his artwork directly in the land. In *A Line Made By Walking*, created in 1967 (Figure 4), Long creates a visible line in the grass from repeatedly walking from one side of a field to the other. He showcases the way the body alone can be used to create line through repeated gesture. Repetition also allows Long to reconnect with place after feeling disconnected. In many ways, I see myself doing something similar to Long, in that I gravitate to a repetitive gesture in order to create a collection of single lines and reconnect. In the work titled *Day in, Day out* (Figure 5 & 6) I drew a line using ball point pen across the width of each notebook according to a predetermined time. These times were taken from conversation between myself and a loved one living in Newfoundland. The friction from the repeated gesture began to tear the paper, exposing the frayed layers underneath. The repetition of the gesture for each notebook became an intimate (albeit removed) remapping or reliving of our conversation. The collection of notebooks (thirty in total), once installed in a row along the gallery wall, revealed a fragmented and torn horizon line.



(Figure 4) *A Line Made by Walking* – Richard Long, 1967. Used by permission of the artist. © Richard Long. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2020



(Figure 5) *Day in, Day out* (Detail) – Emma Burry, 2019.

The role of repetition in my practice is a way to map time, to more thoroughly connect and recollect emotion, and to attempt to articulate distance and longing. With the passage of time that comes with repeated gestures and laborious processes, I try to articulate how it equates

to a spanning of temporalities or metaphoric spaces. When I am actively participating in a repetitive gesture my mind is able to access thoughts found further into the distance of longing.

I am interested in working with repetitious gesture because of its ability to transport me, spanning the distance created by longing. I am drawn to the ways in which artist Jackie Winsor employs repetition. In [*Bound Square*](#), Winsor wraps and binds the corners of a square continuously in order to assert labour-intensive processes into painting and sculpture. My interest in Winsor's work is not only for her use of repeated motions but also her use of everyday materials like twine and wood. Winsor addressed her use of rugged materials as a way, "to bring you back to yourself, to not refer you to another time or place or person, but to quietly hold you in an inviting stillness until the piece's



(Figure 6) *Day in, Day out (detail)* – Emma Burry, 2019.

presence and certainty is yours." (MoMA)¹⁰ Within my art practice I also use mundane¹¹ materials and repetitive processes. Repetition allows me to transform familiar objects like paper, yarn, cotton, or wood into art objects that can create affect. Through the transformation of the familiar through generational skills or labour-intensive processes I create horizon lines which can facilitate a broader representation of distance.

I am interested in the relation between the maker, the making, and the made as a way to relay emotion. More specifically, how the experience of making by hand can convey longing. Susan Stewart's writing on longing and its connection with objects is something I draw from. For Stewart, the longing we feel is imparted onto objects that we buy. This object then holds that longing itself, so every time we look at it, we feel that nostalgia again. She writes,

“... In this process of distancing, the memory of the body is replaced by the memory of the object, a memory standing outside the self and thus presenting both the surplus and lack of significance. The experience of the object lies outside

¹⁰ https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81462?artist_id=6402&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

¹¹ By mundane I mean easily accessible, cheaply bought, or domestic in nature.

the body's experience – it is saturated with meanings that will never be fully revealed to us.” (Stewart, 133).

Stewart is more interested in the souvenir and how those objects captivate us but also allow for a capsule that holds our nostalgia from a specific memory. Stewart suggests there is a difference between the souvenir and the unique experience of a maker and their made object. From my own experiences as a maker the relationship between myself and the made objects is closely knit. There is a greater sense of shared empathy between myself and objects made by my hand. The made object lives through the same experience as myself as I make it, creating a different bond which I believe is what Stewart suggests. By working repetitively by hand, I intend to create a deep connection to both material and memory. This connection and repetitive action facilitates my ability to “travel¹²” between my state of longing and a state of comfort or connection. Once the object is created it has been infused with this memory and therefore can hold and transport the viewer to that memory, or a fragment of it.

The Sweater

“Emotion tints all human experience, including the high flights of thought.” – Yi-Fu Tuan



(Figure 7) *I Feel It (Performance)* – Emma Burry, 2019.

Photo: Kat Grabowski.

One of my most recent works was a hand knit sweater with elongated arms that I performed on the beach before it was displayed in the gallery. *I Feel It* presented a new direction for me in that the performance that took place on the beach was in service of the final sculpture. As I wore the sweater, I had someone drop rocks into the abnormally long sleeves (Figure 7). These sleeves – which were closed at the bottom – held the rocks but as a result began to stretch, morph and become very heavy. The struggle I feel with displacement is mirrored in this work as a literal and physical burden that one carries. My aim through the making and performing of this work was to convey longing through an object as well as through the physical sensations that came from dragging the unusual weight, the discomfort and the debility of the garment design. In

¹² Travel in this statement is used to metaphorical describe my perceived movement between two emotional states of being.

the making of this object I wanted to fabricate something that within my cultural identity as an islander brings comfort and warmth but within the context of the project would be physically and visually uncomfortable and exaggerated.

By participating in a long familial lineage of makers/knitters, I was able to connect much deeper with my longing for cultural and societal belonging. I felt this through the physical process of making as well as wearing a garment that is familiar as an object but unfamiliar in its full form¹³. I used the exaggeration of the form as a tool to reflect the emotional constraints of feeling longing. The lengthened arms and weighted “hands” were a purposeful gesture to show the burden of such a complex emotion while reconnecting me to the land.

In the process of making this work I was thinking about artist Rebecca Horn and her performative body sculptures. Horn was interested in unconventional mark making tools and soon began to experiment with how her body could make marks without the direct use of her hands and instead employing devices to hold a simple pencil (as well as other tools). This could either be through the making of marks like, [*Pencil Mask*](#) or through body extensions that elongated and emphasized movement such as her work, [*Finger Gloves*](#). Horn’s work in extending her body has two purposes: first, drawing through gesture, and



(Figure 8) *I Feel It (Performance)* – Emma Burry, 2019. Photo: Kat Grabowski

¹³ The full form of the object being not just a sweater, but this oddly knit, unfunctional object.

second, emphasizing gesture. *I Feel It* was created as an extension of my body. My body extension was to heighten the visibility of the emotional state of longing. The weighted sleeves kept my body grounded and present while continually becoming a greater challenge to manoeuvre. There is a connection between *I Feel It* and Horn's works because of their inherent vulnerability. Where Christopher Pratt and Richard Long delicately touch on longing through colour or gesture, I wear my longing as an extension of my own body.



(Figure 9) *I Feel It* – Emma Burry, 2019.

kept me from reaching out, keeping me isolated. It was a project made to physically isolate me from the land and people around me. My hands could not touch the sand or water, my arms could not hold or hug, it forced me to physically experience longing outside of the emotions in my head.

When I wore the garment, the long, rock filled arms dragged behind me and in doing so, caught and collected broken shells, salty water and sand from the site (Figure 8). As I moved back and forth in the garment, long shallow ruts began to form in the sand, much like a temporary drawing that was created and erased simultaneously. While I longed to touch the land and water, the sweater did it for me, keeping me at an arms length from the elements that make me feel the most “at home”.

Rebecca Horn's *Finger Gloves* were a way to connect her wall to wall with her studio space. *I Feel It* is a body extension that

In its final presentation, *I Feel It* was installed in the gallery, spotlight and hanging central in the space (Figure 9). I was curious to see if the collections of sand, scent, and tears in the fabric of the garment would convey the memory of it having been worn previously, becoming activated to the viewer. Inspired by Susan Stewart's writing on longing, my aim was to see how much memory an object could hold beyond its familiarity as a static object. The act or process of making is a way to think through and evaluate the research I am pursuing while the sweater in its final state functions as a remnant. The sweater acts as a catalyst for thought, allowing the viewer to contemplate the experience of the sweater. This experience (both wearing it, and also imagining the event of when it was worn) then becomes something "longed for".

The Shore

"But in this world we actually live in, distance ceases to be distance and to be blue when we arrive in it." – Rebecca Solnit

The final project I created during my Masters is entitled *Drifting* (Figure 10). I wanted to push the ephemerality of longing, and further explore the use of text and accumulation which I began implementing in my project *I Want Them Back*. *Drifting* consists of five 10-foot panels of dyed chiffon that were intended to hang vertically and staggered in the gallery. Each panel was to be hung at roughly 9 feet high, leaving 1-foot spilling onto the floor. The fabrics translucency and light blue dye would allow for the viewer to see through to the remaining panels and the space beyond. Each panel holds its own horizon line of embroidered text that I wrote about this place. My embroidered reflections expose the alienation felt within the simple changes from my past home to my current one. With the translucency of the fabric and staggered installation, the text would be distorted, compiled or obscured depending on your position within the installation. This would make it difficult to ever take in the full experience at any one point. From far away, the accumulation of text would create a jumbled horizon across the five panels of fabric. Close up, the text becomes accessible, yet the spatial experience begins to blend with your peripherals.

Since I was unable to install my work in its intended form in the gallery, I had to be creative in how to document it for my defense and thesis. I decided to install one of the five panels on the balcony of the condominium I have lived in since my arrival in Vancouver. In doing so, I was not able to get the full spatial experience I had intended nor was I able to witness the layering and distortion of the text, however, something different happened. The translucency of the work created a blue film on the view I



(Figure 10) *Drifting (Balcony Installation)* – Emma Burry, 2020.

have lived with for the past two years. It obscured and transformed the landscape, and as it was influenced by the wind, it shifted and rippled the silhouettes of my reality. The text embroidered onto the panel danced and played on the land that the words were written to critique.

Even though the work was never intended to be shown outside, the experience did have an impact on the way I think as I move forward. *Drifting* has pushed me to think about how I occupy and ponder domestic versus public spaces. So much of my practice as an artist has revolved around creating by hand within the home with the intent to show in the public gallery setting. This project, made in the same way, had the unique ability to be made and shown in the domestic space, giving it a new context. While the experience was not ideal it did push me to reflect on how I am interacting, or how I can interact, in the space between inner and outer spaces through process and installation.



(Figure 11) *Drifting (Balcony Installation Detail)* – Emma Burry, 2020.

The Distance

I can remember seeing the wind that slashes the water and the waves that erode the rocks. I can recall hearing the seagulls that chatter at the waters edge and the rocks that tumble under my feet. I can recollect tasting the salt in the air. I remember feeling it. When I close my eyes and exhale...inhale... I feel it all again.

Can I tell you something? I went back to that rock. You know, the one I used to sit on when I was younger. It's not that big, it's actually kind of a small rock. I sat myself down on it during the low tide. And as the water began to roll in and the light began to dim, I stayed. That moment felt like hours as all my memories collapsed onto themselves in my head. Running into each other. A jumbled mess of memory versus reality that never seemed to line up. I realized something sitting on the rock: the rock was never my friend, and the ocean wasn't either.

You know, all those times I sat on that rock, I thought I had never felt alone. In reality I was alone every time I walked to that rock, and every moment I sat there I was still just as alone as before I sat. I would go there so I could live within my own longing, stranded on a rock that sat on the beach just steps away from a house I knew.

My work is adding to the discussions currently taking place around home, identity/belonging, and broader discussions of displacement within society. We are in interesting times, where technology has taken over our daily lives and our own hands have lost touch with the fabrics of our heritage, leaving us longing for connections we no longer understand. That is where my practice lives, within the distance between physical and metaphorical, interpersonal and introspective. The horizon and the colour blue have both saturated my understanding of what longing is, a distance that both reaches after you and pushes you away. Through the use of hand labor, familial skills and craft processes I am able to connect to the in between space where longing resides, allowing myself the ability to reconnect with people, places, and culture missed. The relationship between my body, the land, and traditional processes has pushed my own understanding of longing in relation to my cultural and societal identity. Moving forward I am excited to delve deeper into research and processes that have appeared throughout my time at Emily Carr University. Performance has become a component of my practice that was unexpected, and as I continue my work, I intend to explore what role it plays within my research. Through the installation of *Drifting* on my balcony, I have gained more questions around how my work adds to dialogues around domesticity and land-based practices. Moving forward, I think it will be worthwhile for me to experiment more with

site-specificity, installing works at home as well as in the gallery, and pushing deeper into what is considered land art. I also intend to further explore the connections between my own fragmented heritage and cultural upbringing in relation to the processes I implement. In many ways I now have more questions to pursue than when I entered the Masters program and I am excited to push further into these questions as I continue expanding my practice.

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